

## Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method for switching between a plurality of boot devices in an information processing unit provided with an external device connector including at least one output port and at least one input port, in which an operating system (OS) is booted from a first boot device for normal operation or is booted from a second boot device for a special operation, said method comprising the steps of:

outputting a verification signal from said output port at the time of powering on or restarting said information processing unit;

determining whether or not said verification signal is input to said input port;

switching an OS boot source to said second boot device when said verification signal is input to said input port; and

switching the OS boot source to said first boot device when said verification signal is not input to said input port.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein a determination result in said determination step varies based on whether or not a dedicated plug for short-circuiting said output port and said input port is inserted in said connector.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein said second boot device is integrated in the main body of said information processing unit.

4. The method according to claim 3, wherein said device can read data from a portable recording medium.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein said second boot device is a portable information storage connectable with a connector.

6. The method according to claim 2, wherein said second boot device is a portable information storage connectable with a connector, and said second boot device is integrated in the main body of said information processing unit.
7. The method according to claim 1, wherein said second boot device is an information storage connected through a communications line.
8. The method according to claim 1, wherein said verification signal is in a form different from a signal input to said input port in normal processing.
9. The method according to claim 6, wherein said verification signal is in a form different from a signal input to said input port in normal processing.
10. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
    comparing the version of the OS stored in said first boot device with the version of the OS booted from said second boot device after the OS boot source is switched to said second boot device, and  
    writing the OS booted from said second boot device into said first boot device, when the version of the OS booted from said second boot device is newer than the version of the OS stored in said first boot device.
11. The method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of selecting, from the OS booted from said second boot device, only software contents necessary for performing normal processing in said information processing unit, said selected software contents being written in said step of writing the OS booted from said second boot device into said first boot device.
12. The method according to claim 1, wherein each step for switching between said first and second boot devices is set in a basic input/output system (BIOS).

13. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

comparing the version of the OS stored in said first boot device with the version of the OS booted from said second boot device after the OS boot source is switched to said second boot device,

writing the OS booted from said second boot device into said first boot device, when the version of the OS booted from said second boot device is newer than the version of the OS stored in said first boot device, and

selecting, from the OS booted from said second boot device, only software contents necessary for performing normal processing in said information processing unit, said selected software contents being written in said step of writing the OS booted from said second boot device into said first boot device,

wherein a determination result in said determination step varies based on whether or not a dedicated plug for short-circuiting said output port and said input port is inserted in said connector, a said second boot device is integrated in the main body of said information processing unit, said device can read data from a portable recording medium, said second boot device is a portable information storage connectable with a connector and is integrated in the main body of said information processing unit, and said verification signal is in a form different from a signal input to said input port in normal processing.

14. The method according to claim 13, wherein said second boot device includes a compact disc (CD).

15. A method for switching between boot devices in an information processing unit, comprising a plug attachable to an external device connector provided in the information processing unit and having a plurality of input/output pins is used as a key device for determining whether to boot an OS from a first boot device for a normal operation or from a second boot device for a special operation at the time of power on, wherein the OS boot source is switched from the first boot device to the second boot device by directly connecting at least one output of said plug with at least one input thereof.

16. The method according to claim 15, wherein security management for said OS is implemented based on the presence/absence of said plug, the presence/absence of data in said second boot device or the presence/absence of the second boot device itself.

17. The method according to claim 16, wherein said second boot device includes a compact disc (CD).

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